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San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

JANUARY 1988

The San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program was established in mid-1984 as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, California Department of Fish and Game, and California Department of Water Resources. The purposes of the Program are to investigate the problems associated with the drainage of irrigated agricultural lands in the San Joaquin Valley and to formulate, evaluate, and recommend alternatives for the immediate and long-term management of those problems. Consistent with these purposes, Program objectives address the following key areas: (1) Public health, (2) surface- and ground-water resources, (3) agricultural productivity, and (4) wildlife resources.

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY DRAINAGE PROGRAM

PREFACE

An important criterion for selecting and implementing solutions to the agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems in the San Joaquin Valley is **public acceptability**. This is based on the recognition that plans will be more easily implemented if affected individuals, special interest groups, local communities, and the general public participate actively in the planning process.

Public involvement encompasses a body of techniques to inform people about and seek their contribution to decisions that affect their interests. The role of public involvement in the *San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program* (SJVDP) is to help in developing management plans containing solutions that are:

- technically and economically feasible,
- environmentally sound, and
- politically and socially acceptable.

The general public and special interest groups often contribute information and perspectives that decisionmakers and planners may not have considered. Experience shows that affected and interested publics who participate in and contribute to the planning and decisionmaking process from an early date will help achieve and provide public support for decisions. Limited opportunities for involvement, particularly when they occur late in the process, invite opposition because of lack of information and trust. The study process must be perceived as valid and appropriate; public concerns must be addressed; and the public must be a part of the decisionmaking process.

The SJVDP has prepared materials that will be useful in developing public understanding of the program purpose and in describing the process underway. The SJVDP has undertaken a broad research effort in support of planning objectives. Research is also underway by other State and Federal agencies, the California university systems, San Joaquin Valley water districts, and concerned organizations.

A *citizens advisory committee* was formed in 1987 to advise SJVDP management on planning and decisionmaking. The committee, which has been meeting since March 1987, is one of the most important elements of the public involvement program. The citizens advisory committee, composed of 14 representatives of key interests, provides advice on the decisions to be made in the SJVDP and on the public involvement program. The committee helps ensure the continuing involvement by knowledgeable, affected, and interested community leaders representing the diverse interests in San Joaquin Valley agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and solutions.

The public involvement strategy for the SJVDP has four main components:

1. Provide for periodic meetings of the citizens advisory committee throughout the remainder of the study period.

2. Conduct public workshops and meetings to solicit responses and comments from the broader public.

3. Provide a wide variety of information on the study to increase public understanding.

4. Document the public involvement program process and results.

The public involvement plan that follows contains *a statement of objectives, a description of the relationship of public involvement to the planning process,* and *a description of the public involvement program elements* (including implementation steps and an assignment of responsibilities).

Public involvement is, of course, dynamic. Over the course of the study, conditions may change or situations may arise that will require adjustments to this plan.

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES

A public involvement program must be undertaken with deliberation and purpose. The objectives of the public involvement program of the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program are to:

1. **Seek the involvement in decisionmaking of all persons and organizations affected by or interested in agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and potential solutions to those problems.** The target audiences are:

   - individuals, organizations, and government agencies with specific interests or insights (for example, *public health, agriculture, water agencies, fish and wildlife, hunting, other environmental interests,* and *business*);

   - individuals, organizations, and government agencies with community bases (for example, *chambers of commerce, the League of Women Voters, regional planning groups,* and *local and county governments*).

   - elected officials (Federal, State, and local).

   - the media (print and electronic); and

   - the general public (residents and business people interested in agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems).

2. **Develop public understanding of the SJVDP (including the public involvement plan) so that people can contribute to the planning and decisionmaking process.**

3. **Invite public involvement in the:**

   - definition of the scope and severity of the agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems;

   - selection of planning elements and options (for example, source control, treatment, disposal, reuse, and environmental and institutional changes); and the

   - formulation and evaluation of alternative *plans* (various combinations of plan options).

4. Seek (to the extent possible) to identify and accommodate the needs and concerns of diverse interest groups concerned with agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems.

5. Seek general public acceptance of the preferred plans.

RELATIONSHIP OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TO THE DRAINAGE PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS

The main measure of a successful public involvement program is whether all interested persons were given the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the success of the planning effort. The public involvement process assumes that program activities will be conducted in a manner that is open to public review and that the program staff will:

- provide adequate information to interested persons so they can understand the agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and study efforts; and

- incorporate public concerns and information into the plan formulation and evaluation process.

Public involvement activities will be structured around the completion of the following program activities:

1. The presentation, in a mid-1988 report, of the valley agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems, planning principles and concepts, management options, and preliminary alternative plans.

2. The ongoing development and evaluation of alternative plans. This is an iterative process that *may* require public review and comment at periodic intervals during fiscal years 1988 and 1989.

3. The presentation and evaluation of alternative plans. A draft report is planned for the fall of 1989.

4. The presentation of final study results and the preferred plans for solving valley agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems. A final report is planned for the fall of 1990.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM ELEMENTS

This section describes the four public involvement program elements: **the citizens advisory committee, public sessions (workshops and meetings), public information,** and **public involvement program documentation**. The SJVDP program staff--defined here to include the interagency study team and, as appropriate, staff members of associated agencies and public involvement professionals--will carry out the public involvement program.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A key to a successful SJVDP public involvement program is the **citizens advisory committee**. The committee, chartered by the State of California, began meeting regularly in March 1987. The 14 committee members are representative of a broad range of interests from the San Joaquin Valley, the San Francisco Bay, and the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta. The members are:

Don Anthrop, professor of environmental sciences at San Jose State University;

Jean Auer, a consultant to the Committee for Water Policy Consensus;

Jerald Butchert, general manager of Westlands Water District;

Jim Crenshaw, president of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance;

Michael DiBartolomeis, a toxicologist in health-risk assessment and president of Toxicology Research International;

Tom Graff, senior attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund;

Stephen Hall, executive director of the Land Preservation Association;

Clifford Koster, a farmer and chairman of the water committee of the San Joaquin Farm Bureau;

Chester McCorkle, professor of agricultural economics at the University of California, Davis;

Dan Nelson, manager of San Luis Water District;

Polly Smith, member of the board, California League of Women Voters;

Mike Stearns, farm manager and chairman of irrigation and canal district coalitions in Fresno and Merced counties;

Ron Stork, associate conservation director of Friends of the River and member of the Sierra Club; and

Joe Summers, consulting engineer in agricultural irrigation and drainage.

The committee, as stated in its charter, ***shall provide the State of California with comments, advice, and recommendations on the State's participation with the U.S. Department of the Interior on the Policy and Management Committee of the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program. Specifically, the Committee shall address (a) the definition of problems to be studied, (b) the identification of drainage problem impacts and corresponding needs for investigation, (c) the identification and evaluation of alternative solutions, and (d) the public involvement and information program.***

The committee:

- provides a means for the different interests in the affected areas to serve in an advisory role on agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and potential solutions;
- provides a mechanism to help resolve conflicting viewpoints;
- provides the opportunity for those most interested in or affected by agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and solutions to pursue consensus on acceptable plans (the likelihood of plan implementation through government action increases when representatives of key public interests can agree on solutions);
- establishes an effective means to communicate with the constituencies represented by the committee members or with which they are associated; and
- provides an important nucleus of publics to build support for implementation of solutions.

The SJVDP program staff supports committee operations by making logistical arrangements for meetings, furnishing program information, making staff presentations, facilitating committee discussions, and maintaining committee records.

PUBLIC SESSIONS: PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS

The citizens advisory committee will host a series of public workshops and meetings to offer the broader public--interested and affected individuals and organizations--the opportunity to **discuss, comment on**, and **react to** SJVDP activities and proposals.

The distinction between a *workshop* and a *meeting* is in the *format*. The workshop format *maximizes discussion* among participants and with the SJVDP program staff. The meeting format features the opportunity for the public to *react to* proposals. The program staff, in consultation with the citizens advisory committee, will decide on the format for each series of public sessions.

Three series of public sessions are now planned:

- The *first* series will focus on the presentation, in a mid-1988 report, of the valley agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems, planning principles and concepts, management options, and preliminary alternative plans.

- The *second* series (probably in the fall of 1989) will give the public the opportunity to discuss and comment on the evaluation of alternative plans.

- The *third series* (probably in the spring of 1990) will give the public the opportunity to hear about, comment on, and react to the final study results and the preferred plans for solving valley agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems.

Over the course of the study, the citizens advisory committee and the SJVDP staff may, depending on study issues and results, determine that additional sessions with the public are needed to obtain public input.

Each series of public sessions will be held in the San Joaquin Valley and the San Francisco Bay and San Joaquin/Sacramento Delta areas to give all interested parties the opportunity to participate.

The information obtained from each series of public sessions will be recorded and summarized into a *report* for distribution to participants, the citizens advisory committee, and other interested persons. The citizens advisory committee will assess the application of the public input and make recommendations to SJVDP management.

The **implementation steps** and **responsibilities** for each series of sessions are:

1. The citizens advisory committee and SJVDP staff agree on (a) the need for the public sessions; (b) the format and agenda; (c) the dates, times, and locations; (d) the general contents of the invitation and notice to be mailed to all individuals and organizations on the SJVDP mailing list; and (e) other publicity.

2. The SJVDP staff makes:

   - all logistical arrangements for the sessions;

   - prepares and distributes the invitation and notice that will (a) present necessary background information, (b) summarize the topics to be discussed, (c) highlight key issues, (d) describe the agenda and format, and (e) indicate where people can obtain more detailed information; and

   - prepares and distributes (or places) other session publicity (for example, news releases, display advertising).

3. The citizens advisory committee and the SJVDP staff hold the public sessions. Each has distinctive roles. The chairman of the *advisory committee* will assign at

least three members to a session. Their roles are to open the session, describe the committee and its purpose, and listen to and interact with public participants. *SJVDP staff* will make presentations to increase public understanding of the topics and to act as *resources* in the discussions to answer questions and clarify issues. Discussion periods will be professionally facilitated and recorded.

4. The SJVDP staff prepares the draft report that integrates the comments and questions from each session.

5. The citizens advisory committee (a) reviews and comments on the draft report; and (b) advises, as appropriate, SJVDP management on public comments and reactions and how they might affect future study.

6. The SJVDP staff prepares the final session report, incorporating advisory committee comments and actions, and distributes it to all participants and other interested persons.

PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

The distribution of information on all aspects of the SJVDP is essential to build public understanding of agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and the alternative solutions and their impacts; and to keep the study process open to public review. The SJVDP will employ a variety of methods to achieve those purposes: *periodic status reports, visual and print materials, relations with the media, events for special target audiences, presentations to organizations,* and *responses to requests for information.*

Periodic Status Reports. The SJVDP periodically prepares and distributes status reports to over 4,000 persons and organizations on the program's mailing list. Status reports normally contain information on program research activities, government actions affecting the program, public involvement events,and reports on citizen advisory committee and other meetings and activities.

Visual and Print Materials.

1. The public information component of the public involvement program needs a wide variety of **visual aids** (for example, maps, charts, diagrams, and photos) in different *formats* (for example, slides, overheads, stock film, print handouts, and displays) to accompany program presentations. Many of the visual aids already exist, but they are in several different locations. The SJVDP staff will first assemble and organize the available visual aids. It will then determine what additional aids are necessary and produce them in the appropriate formats.

2. In some cases, **information bulletins** will be needed to summarize--in lay language--the contents of program reports to *increase public understanding* and *facilitate the public's participation.* The citizens advisory committee will advise the SJVDP staff on the information bulletins that the staff should produce.

Relations with the Media. Print and electronic media coverage of the study is essential to a successful public involvement effort.

1. **Contact with reporters and editors** will be established and maintained--briefing them on the program, supplying them with all reports, announcing public involvement events, and responding to all media inquiries.

2. Prior to the first series of public sessions, the citizens advisory committee will hold a **field trip and workshop with reporters** to discuss the SJVDP and the public involvement program.

3. **News releases** on various aspects of the program will be prepared and distributed to the media.

Events for Special Target Audiences. Occasionally, actions or statements by individuals or organizations associated with important program target audiences may reveal misunderstandings about agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems and/or the likely impacts from management options under consideration. Additionally, the cooperation of and support from some target audiences may be so important that the SJVDP should give them special attention. To be sensitive to these situations, the SJVDP staff will hold events for special target audiences. Examples are **field trips** and **meetings or briefings.**

Presentations to Organizations. The SJVDP staff frequently receives requests from organizations to provide program briefings and presentations. The SJVDP staff will respond to those requests by developing presentations, drawing on its library of visual material (see above), for delivery to organizations.

Responses to Requests for Information. The SJVDP staff responds to requests for technical reports and reference materials to support research efforts and answers questions on research findings and program policy.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION

The SJVDP staff will assemble and maintain documentation on the public involvement program containing:

- a chronology of public involvement program events and activities;
- a summary of the work and actions of the citizens advisory committee;
- a summary of major issues and concerns raised by the citizens advisory committee and the broader public and how SJVDP management and staff dealt with them in developing the preferred plans; and
- a list of public session participants by affiliation.

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